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Dayton and Its Rivers

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Economic development and recreation will be the focus of the fourth-annual River Summit, a joint initiative of the University of Dayton Rivers Institute and the Ohio's Great Corridor Association.

The summit begins at 8:30 a.m. Thursday, March 31, on the sixth floor of the University of Dayton's College Park Center, 1529 Brown St.

Since 2008, the meeting has attracted leaders from the state and local levels from Sidney to Fairfield to discuss strategies to make the most of their shared asset: the Great Miami River watershed.

One of the many outcomes of the summit has been Ohio's Great Corridor initiative, established by past participants to continue the collaborative work of the summit year-round. The initiative recognizes the potential of the Miami Valley's rivers for recreation, tourism, combating "brain-drain," job creation, and economic and residential development.

The Ohio's Great Corridor initiative has established four river corridor goals:

- Develop city waterfronts
- Promote recreation and tourism
- Preserve farmland
- Protect open spaces.

An early success for the initiative has been earning an Ohio water trail designation for the Great Miami, Mad and Stillwater rivers in August. The state awards water trail designations to rivers or creeks primarily used for recreational canoeing and kayaking.

Future plans to attract tourism from across the nation, to continue riverfront development and build strategies for keeping Ohio's college graduates in the state will be on the agenda.

Summit attendees will also discuss farmland and open space, focusing particularly on the Indian Lake Watershed Project, which worked with farmers to develop conservation practices to decrease sediment flowing into the lake. With an 80 percent reduction in sediment flow, the project is a successful example of collaborative leadership and watershed management.

Sean Creighton, executive director of the Southwestern Ohio Council for Higher Education, will deliver the keynote address on "The importance of place-making."

Representatives of cities, businesses and other organizations have been invited to share information at display tables about their initiatives and recent developments along the river corridor.

Participants include the University of Dayton Rivers Institute and River Stewards, the Miami Conservancy District, Dayton Development Coalition, Five Rivers MetroParks, Miami County Parks District, Greater Dayton Partners for the Environment and representatives of cities and communities along the Great Miami River.

For more information, contact Cameron Fullam, assistant director of media relations, at 937-229-3256 or fullam@udayton.edu.